



H1N1 Flu and Pregnancy

Some Things You Need To Know

Seasonal flu (influenza) is a common viral illness that occurs every year. The virus that causes it is usually known, and vaccines are ready at the beginning of the flu season. Pregnant women are at high risk for complications from the flu, and should get a seasonal flu shot.

Pandemic flu is an outbreak of a new type of flu virus that spreads rapidly from one country to another. A pandemic begins when the new flu virus is easily passed from person to person. Because the virus is new, people have no natural immunity. It takes months to make the vaccine. Without vaccine or immunity, the virus passes rapidly from person to person.

H1N1 (swine flu) virus was declared a pandemic in June 2009 because it was affecting people in countries around the world. This fall and winter, the H1N1 virus is expected to make large numbers of people ill in the United States.

Most people who get H1N1 will become mildly ill. Some people are more likely to have serious complications from the virus. Women who are pregnant or who just had a baby are at higher risk. Severe complications have included miscarriage, preterm birth, and death. Other people at high risk are infants, young children and those with certain ongoing illnesses.

If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, you should make special plans to protect yourself and your newborn.

The H1N1 vaccine should be available in your community by the fall or winter of 2009. Antiviral drugs are also available by prescription to treat flu symptoms. Pregnant women in Washington State will be at the top of the list to get antiviral drugs and the H1N1 vaccine.

You may be reluctant to take flu medicines or get the vaccine because of concern for your baby. Medical experts agree that complications from getting the flu are far more dangerous for the baby than any risks from drugs or vaccines. Vaccines help the body develop its natural process of building immunity. It is important to be vaccinated against seasonal flu and H1N1 flu.

If you get symptoms of flu while you are pregnant or in the first two weeks after birth, call your prenatal care provider right away. The flu medicines work best when you start taking them soon after you get sick.

For more information about H1N1 and how to protect yourself:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy/

or

www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1





H1N1 Flu

What To Do If You Are Pregnant or Just Had a Baby

Be prepared for a flu outbreak—now is the time

Get organized at home

- ☐ Agree on a point of contact where family members can check in if you are separated during an emergency.
- ☐ Have a cell phone or regular phone with a cord (cordless phones won't work if the power is out).
- ☐ Keep enough food and water to last several days.
- ☐ Have medications on hand that are recommended by your prenatal care provider for fever.
- ☐ Have an emergency kit with first aid supplies, blankets, and cold packs.

Protect yourself from the flu

- ☐ Get flu shots for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu. Even if you have had a flu illness, you should get the shots. Family members and those who care for children under six months old should also get shots.
- ☐ Wash your hands frequently and cover your cough to prevent the spread of flu germs. Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer for when there is no soap and water.
- ☐ Avoid crowds and contact with sick family members or other people with flu symptoms.
- ☐ Learn to recognize the symptoms of flu. Contact your prenatal care provider right away if you are sick or have had contact with someone with the flu.
- ☐ Unless your prenatal care provider tells you to come in for an exam, stay at home until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without taking fever medicine.

- ☐ If you get the flu, it's important to take the antiviral drugs and fever medicine your prenatal provider recommends. Have a plan so you can get these medications right away when you need them.

Plan for your special needs

- ☐ Know who can help you and your family if you get sick. Keep a list of phone numbers, including your prenatal care provider.
- ☐ Ask your prenatal provider how they will care for you if their staff is sick or if schools and businesses close.
- ☐ Know who can help you with breastfeeding once your baby is born. Breastfeeding is the best way to protect your newborn from infection. If you have the flu, know how to protect your baby while breastfeeding. If you cannot breastfeed, you will need a supply of infant formula.

Go on line for more information

Emergency supplies:

www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/hbk_pdf/list.pdf

Getting flu shots:

www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/vaccination/pregnant_qa.htm

H1N1 influenza, pregnancy, and infant feeding:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy/